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President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 32

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General
(A/55/492/Rev.1)

Draft resolution A/55/L.30

The President: I give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.30.

Mr. Nejad-Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): In less than two months' time, in January 2001, a modest worldwide media campaign will begin in order to launch the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and bring the issue to the public. As stated in paragraph 6 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, 12 television spots of 30 seconds each, dealing with the stories of 12 individuals whom the Secretary-General calls the unsung heroes of dialogue, because they "have reached across the 'divide' to the 'other'", will be offered to all television stations in the world for broadcasting as many times as possible during the year 2001.

Another public campaign involves the preparation of a book by a number of eminent persons, in cooperation with the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General. The eminent persons have accepted the invitation to reflect on issues such as ethnic cleansing, and concepts such as diversity and the common denominator of values, in the context of the United Nations; on diversity as the human face of globalization in today's world, which has never been more integrated, more vulnerable or more unequal; and on dialogue as a seed for a new paradigm of international relations. These are fundamental questions, and will require soul-searching reflections on the part of the authors. I would like to underscore the importance of this effort as a means of helping us all to develop a vision for the future and for the common destiny of humankind.

I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the leadership he has demonstrated and for his personal conviction about the potential of dialogue. I cannot not fail to express my gratitude to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, who is himself an effective practitioner of dialogue, for his faith in, and creative efforts to advance, dialogue among civilizations in both theory and practice.

My delegation looks forward to these promotional activities in the year 2001 on a dialogue among civilizations. In my view, these and other activities will provide a good start to the year 2001 in promoting the beginning of dialogue, but it will not end there. Dialogue is as expansive as we dare to imagine. It is expansive in terms of the interlocutors and in terms of

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the subject. Of course, it is not an end in itself but represents a new approach — a qualitatively different mode of communication and discussion. I would therefore like to suggest that, in the year 2001, when we commemorate the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, we prepare ourselves to celebrate a new beginning, and not an end. We should prepare ourselves to lay a concrete foundation upon which we may be able to build our common humanity.

We are privileged to live in exciting times: the cold war is over and we are at the beginning of the third millennium. Our accumulated knowledge and human experience ought to point to a profound realization of our interdependence, common destiny and need to celebrate life in all its diversity and human dignity everywhere in the world.

It was perhaps in response to such a realization that the 191 world leaders, including 147 heads of State or Government, who took part in the Millennium Summit held from 6 to 8 September this year in New York, committed themselves, upon the creative suggestion of the Secretary-General, to halving, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same year, to providing clean drinking water and education for all, to reverse the spread of AIDS, make the right to development a reality for everyone and free the entire human race from want. The world leaders underscored freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility as fundamental values, essential to international relations in the twenty-first century.

These were not simple words, nor are they uttered frequently by large groups of world leaders. The goals will not easily be achieved. But, as the Secretary-General has acknowledged, the remarkable convergence of views among the world leaders on the challenges we face, and the urgency of their call to action, are striking. These undertakings by the world leaders are a source of hope for our common humanity in the twenty-first century.

We will rise to the challenge only if we revisit our approach to problem resolution. That is why, in our opinion, the call for a dialogue among civilizations has been welcomed across the world by both the public and private sectors. The objectives that our leaders set out to achieve are within reach when we dare to rise above short-term and narrow interests and take responsibility, as world citizens; when we dare not to fear our differences, and attempt to understand one another's concerns and aspirations; when we accord each other the respect, compassion, tolerance and dignity each human being across our shrinking world intrinsically deserves; when we truly avoid the tyranny of indifference and dare to genuinely care for our neighbours and fellow human beings — or, to put it simply, when we dare to have a dialogue at all levels and in all fields. This is our understanding of a dialogue among civilizations. Admittedly, dialogue is difficult, and we need to develop the requisite human skills for it.

President Khatami, who proposed the need for dialogue among civilizations, is the first to concede, as he did in his statement at the round table on dialogue among civilizations, which was held the day before the Millennium Summit, on 5 September, at the United Nations, that

> "dialogue is not easy. It is even more difficult to prepare and open up vistas upon one's inner existence to others."

However, recognizing that, despite its difficulty, there is no escaping "dialogue" if, as human beings, we are to secure the common destiny that befits us as rational beings, President Khatami hastened to point out that:

> "A belief in dialogue paves the way for vivacious hope: the hope of living in a world permeated by virtue, humanity and love, and not merely by the reign of economic indices and destructive weapons. Should the spirit of dialogue prevail, humanity, culture and civilization will prevail. We should all have faith in this triumph."

Allow me to express our gratitude to the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and his staff for their efforts aimed at promoting the concept of dialogue among civilizations and for organizing the round table on the subject on 5 September, in which many heads of State, ministers, senior officials and eminent personalities participated. Each speaker contributed profoundly to our understanding of who we are, where we are heading, and the great potential of dialogue among civilizations to find answers to our common challenges.

The Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations, at its best, can be the true home of dialogue among civilizations — the forum where such a dialogue can flourish and bear fruit in every field of human endeavour. The Secretary-General has stated that if this dialogue does not take place every day, among all nations, within and between civilizations, cultures and groups, no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure.

The President of the Republic of Namibia highlighted the need for dialogue in order for us to develop an appreciation of one another as human beings with diverse cultures, if we are to begin to understand one another's social and economic needs and viewpoints.

The President of Algeria saw great potential in dialogue as a tool for withstanding the onslaught of uniformity of a one-dimensional model stemming from materially rich countries, which tends to transform genuine and warm societies into what he called "schizophrenic societies".

The President of Indonesia elaborated on the absolute necessity for dialogue within civilizations. The President of the Republic of Nigeria expounded on the notion of why we need to rediscover the value of dialogue and return to the fundamental faith that life, all life, is sacred in our communities, our nations and, indeed, in the global community; to become our brothers' and sisters' keepers; and to care to share.

The President of Latvia defined dialogue as listening not just with an open mind but an open heart and an open spirit. The Emir of the State of Qatar emphasized the value of tolerance and diversity in today's world and underscored Qatar's support for, and participation in, dialogue at three levels: academic, media-related and governmental.

The President of Georgia rhetorically asked if we could not, after several millenniums of existence, avail ourselves of humankind's accumulated experience and make the universal dream of peaceful coexistence and the mutual complementarity of cultures finally come true.

The President of the Republic of Mali recognized dialogue among civilizations as one of the most fundamental which the United Nations has had in its brief history, but he did not hide his apprehension that it might suffer the same fate as several other initiatives of its kind — that is, to be forgotten after the initial fanfare. He considered that it would be a pity and highly detrimental if dialogue among civilizations served only as an outlet for the expression of profound anguish and concern but did not enable us to integrate social and cultural aspects into the forces of globalization, which is, to date, driven only by the logic of the market.

The President of Mozambique said that he regarded the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations as a vivid invitation to revive the debate on interaction among the peoples of the world as we strive to meet the challenge of bringing people together in a more just world that is free from conflict, poverty and hunger.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Culture of Costa Rica stressed the importance of recognizing that amid the magnificent diversity of cultures and forms of life, we are a single family with a common destiny. He pointed out the need for humankind to unite to create a sustainable global society based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.

It was only fitting that the morning programme on 5 September should end with typical Indian wisdom. The Minister for External Affairs of India pointed out that the dialogue which, it is hoped, will bring together the advances of all civilizations will be judged by one touchstone — compassion. It will promote a reaffirmation of the human conscience and of universal fellowship, and ensure that care is provided to those whom material advances have left behind. He expressed trust that this dialogue among civilizations would promote a sense of indivisibility and of mutual belonging that would nurture the feeling that a community's or civilization's ascent cannot be complete until it is accompanied by the progress and advancement of the whole of humanity. The Minister warned that the maintenance and promotion of identities and the protection of cultural and civilizational traditions must not become a pretext for ultra-nationalism and exclusion.

I realize that I have not done justice to any of the statements made by the leaders who participated in the round table on dialogue among civilizations, but I have tried to convey that each and every one of them was important, profound and deserving of further study. They constitute a body of knowledge on dialogue

which can serve as a guiding light as we begin to ponder the prospect and potential of dialogue among civilizations.

I now have the distinct pleasure to introduce the draft resolution on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, contained in document A/55/L.30. The draft resolution before the Assembly is the result of a constructive process of consultation, and I wish to thank the many delegations that participated in the process and contributed to improving the text. I have the honour of noting that, in addition to the sponsors indicated in document A/55/L.30, 14 other States have indicated that they have decided to become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The draft resolution is longer than the one adopted last year for two obvious reasons: first, because a larger number of delegations contributed to its development and, secondly, that since this draft resolution, when adopted, would usher in the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, more ideas are introduced in it.

The fourth preambular paragraph is derived from a section of paragraph 6 of the Millennium Declaration regarding how tolerance is a fundamental value of international relations in the twenty-first century. The fifth preambular paragraph deals with interdependence and globalization, and the opportunity dialogue among civilizations provides to emphasize the cultural aspect of globalization. The eighth preambular paragraph is derived from paragraph 1 of article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and peoples' rights to self-determination, their freedom to determine their political status and their freedom to pursue their economic, social and cultural development. The tenth preambular paragraph emphasizes cooperation, partnership and inclusion as means of addressing global threats and challenges by seeking common grounds among and within civilizations.

Operative paragraph 3, like last year's resolution, invites all to further intensify their programmes to promote dialogue among civilizations. Operative paragraph 5 deals with educational curricula — the inclusion of programmes of study that would help enhance appreciation of cultural diversity. Operative paragraph 8 is intended to highlight the commemoration of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations in the penultimate week of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. It also seeks to allow for deliberation on and consideration of any follow-up measure or agreed final text. It also encourages participation at a high political level. The Secretary-General and his Personal Representative may wish to arrange for a presentation to the plenary Assembly by eminent persons or for the undertaking of other activities. Operative paragraph 9 calls attention to the Trust Fund on dialogue among civilizations and invites contributions to it so that continuity regarding this idea can be maintained on a voluntary basis. Operative paragraph 11 requests the Secretary-General to provide a substantive report about the activities during the Year and also about his vision for the future of dialogue among civilizations.

I trust that the draft will be adopted without a vote and hope that it will constitute a basis for a concerted effort to promote dialogue and expand the common values and principles of the family of humankind.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union.

As the Secretary-General indicated in his report on this item to the fifty-fourth General Assembly, in the absence of a universally recognized definition of the notion of civilization, the idea of a dialogue among civilizations can be interpreted in several ways. For its part, the European Union believes it preferable to understand dialogue among civilizations as a dialogue among cultures in the broadest sense of the term. Culture is both one of the most typical qualities and a basic aspect of human beings. The culture of a country or of a society is made up of a multitude of elements that reflect all aspects of human experience: geography, environment, language, history, science, the arts and beliefs, to give just a few examples. In the view of the European Union, any dialogue among civilizations to be undertaken must embrace all the elements that make up the wealth of cultures. To exclude some of these would be to impose an unfortunate limit on a dialogue that should be as rich as possible.

The plurality and diversity of cultures which the world displays to us every day are both a source of wealth for humanity and the foundation on which international relations are based. An inevitable corollary of the diversity of cultures is the differences in sensibilities between individuals or societies of

different cultures. History teaches us, unfortunately, that these differences can lead to mistrust, and that mistrust can in turn lead to hostility. For the European Union, the establishment of a dialogue among cultures requires the international community to shoulder the dual task of preserving cultural diversity while protecting against the risk of misunderstanding that such diversity can engender. In order for us to understand each other, it is important to create a favourable environment and have shared points of reference.

The undertaking of a dialogue — whether between individuals, societies or States — presupposes that the two parties accept and respect each other. One does not enter into dialogue with someone whom one does not recognize as an equal, notwithstanding the differences between the two. Similarly, the European Union believes that the recognition by States, of the values of tolerance and respect for the intrinsic dignity of human beings and of human rights, and the implementation of these values by the civil societies and individuals that make up States, contribute to the promotion of dialogue among cultures.

With regard to relations among States, the European Union believes that the founding of the United Nations was an essential milestone in the history of international relations. The United Nations is the first lasting international organization within which States are able to debate, on an equal footing, all questions relating directly or indirectly to the prevention and resolution of conflicts. The European Union considers that the strengthening of the role and means of action of the United Nations and the agencies of the United Nations system is a fundamental way of promoting a dialogue among cultures.

The United Nations Charter, in proclaiming the dignity and worth of the individual, the equal rights of men and women and of nations and the undertaking of Member States to practise tolerance has established the principles within which dialogue must take place. Within the United Nations system, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), because of its specific competencies in the area of education and culture, has a particular role to play in the development of a dialogue among cultures. In this respect, the European Union welcomes UNESCO's designation as the main body for the implementation of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We welcome the drafts prepared by that organization with a view to making a reality of the concept of the dialogue among civilizations.

Dialogue among civilizations, however, cannot simply be limited to inter-State relations. It implies that we must promote among individuals, whatever their creed, a curiosity about other cultures. In this way we can develop direct exchanges between individuals and groups of people that have common linguistic, artistic, scientific, spiritual and human interests. The development and deepening of the dialogue among these interlocutors presupposes an active role for individuals themselves, institutions that represent civil society, non-governmental organizations and international organizations.

The European Union considers that the development of the activities of these various players is a way in which we can step up exchanges and encounters among people from different cultures. We call upon Member States to facilitate this development in every way that they can.

Over and above the traditional institutional framework for international relations, globalization and the fast development of new information and communications technologies give us new and extraordinary opportunities for expression and exchange. Today we are seeing only the beginnings of these developments. The European Union welcomes these developments, which place the individual again at the heart of the process of the communication of knowledge and gives the individual an unprecedented capacity to take the initiative. The European Union calls upon Member States to mobilize and contribute to the development of new information and communications technology and to enable all human beings to have access to it.

The existence of a dialogue among civilizations requires one last condition that must urgently be met: the preservation of plurality and diversity of cultures in all their dimensions. As the Secretary-General points out in the report before us, diversity goes hand in hand with universality and underlies all thinking on the dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The European Union realizes that globalization, with all its rich potential, nevertheless carries the risk of making behaviour, cultural codes and means of

communication uniform. What is more, the risk of marginalizing or even causing the disappearance of minority forms of culture is often exacerbated by economic disparities and imbalances in levels of access to modern media, particularly the new forms of information and communications technology.

The European Union believes, as does the Secretary-General, that diversity represents the human face of globalization. It hopes that Member States will give themselves the long-term objective of preserving cultural diversity while also respecting universal values. The Union considers that we should think about the ways in which we can bring this about. We welcome the setting up on 5 September 2000 of an Eminent Persons Group, invited by the Secretary-General to lead consultations on the dialogue among civilizations and to prepare a report on this subject. The first meeting of this Group will be held from 13 to 15 December of this year in Vienna.

The history of international relations has, unfortunately, given us many more examples of confrontation than of dialogue. The European Union is very happy to see that, in declaring 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, the United Nations has set itself the goal of creating a new paradigm for relations among countries and cultures.

Mr. Vantsevich (Belarus) *(spoke in Russian)*: The delegation of the Republic of Belarus welcomes the discussion on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It is not by chance that at the threshold of the twenty-first century we are reaching a general understanding of the special importance of a dialogue among nations, cultures and civilizations. We all witnessed a manifestation of this during the gathering of heads of State that took place in September 2000 at United Nations Headquarters. We particularly welcome the role that is being played by the Iranian delegation and, personally, by President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in pursuing this noble goal.

An important step was the holding of the Millennium Summit and the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, in which heads of State or Government of Member States of the United Nations assumed responsibility for the preservation of peace, especially through dialogue. The Millennium Summit became the highest manifestation of the concept of dialogue among civilizations. Belarus is fully committed to the obligations of the Declaration and intends to undertake every effort for its fulfilment.

The concept of the diversity of the modern world is firmly interwoven with that of globalization. We fully share the opinion expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the need to continue to reflect on this interdependence and on all its advantages and disadvantages, for the United Nations and for mankind as a whole. How can we compel diversity to be a factor for unity, rather than one for division? This issue will remain on our agenda throughout this century. It must be pointed out that the image of the United Nations in the world community as a whole will greatly depend on its resolution.

The theoretical discussions on the problem of dialogue among civilizations should be tied to practical measures. The year ahead, which the United Nations will devote to this topic, will provide a unique opportunity to mobilize the United Nations potential to take concrete steps to demonstrate the advantage of the strength of dialogue over the philosophies of enmity, intolerance, xenophobia and ethnic conflict. Belarus is ready to participate in this work and will encourage its progress in every possible way.

Mr. Malhotra (India): At the outset, I would like thank Ambassador Hadi Nejad Hosseinian, Permanent Representative of Iran, for introducing the draft resolution before us and for the efforts undertaken by Iran in pursuing this theme over the past two years.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his succinct report, which poses pertinent questions before us, particularly his observation that

> "It is the perception of diversity as a threat that has made so many overlook the common humanity that unites us all." *(A/55/492/Rev.1, para. 4)*

As I have already made a more extensive statement on the theme of dialogue among civilizations in the opening debate in 1998, I will restrict myself to a few observations stemming from the above observation.

It has been observed earlier that diversity is the foundation of this house of the United Nations. This is a truth that we should grasp and imbibe, internalize in our thought and action and hold on to as if our joined destiny depended upon it. Seeking a unity of collective human purpose and belonging and celebrating this vast

and rich mosaic of civilizational variety, which is the essence of the nations united, enhances both the common bond as well as the variegated splendour of the highest attainments of our shared humanity. Our aspiration at the turn of the millennium should be to erase the sense of separation and to cherish our marvellous variety as a common inheritance, which nourishes us all and deepens and enriches our consciousness and sense of ourselves. It should expand our sense of belonging so that another peoples' pain is felt by us as our own and so that the deprivation and indignity of poverty in the lives of any part of the human family are felt as insupportable for ourselves. It should make us eager to reap the rewards of the human insights and the highest accomplishments in the life of the spirit, thought, literature and art of any group of the global community. A globalization of the spirit and of human fellowship, resting on the bedrock of variety, must accompany the homogenizing globalization of our economic and technocratic life.

We largely share the broad contours of the conceptual terrain outlined in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report. However, while elaborating on the indignities, we feel our vision should not be constricted, lest we miss the broader picture of the experience of all the world's societies and communities. Media prominence should certainly not be our guide to what demands scrutiny. The story of the enslavement, disempowerment and subjugation in all respects of what have now been converted into developing societies holds a grave lesson, instruction and a call for a healing commitment and responsibility.

We would caution against any misinterpretation of the dialogue among civilizations as signifying a dialogue among religions. The Indic civilization, from time immemorial, has been characterized by inclusiveness, and not exclusiveness, of spiritual experience. Conceiving of the world as one family, or *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, has been a guiding inspiration. It is also the experience of other cultures that the idea of civilization transcends religious affinities. This perspective is even more central to a dialogue among civilizations, for we need to throw bridges over which a vast traffic of understanding will flow from all sides and consolidate a sense of unity transcending division. Respect for all religious, linguistic and cultural manifestations has been the core of Indian civilizational values. The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization aptly observed recently:

> "'Civilization' and 'religion', to be sure, are not synonymous terms ... Cultures have not necessarily identified themselves with any one single creed".

While promoting the dialogue among civilizations, we need to be clear on this distinction.

We have also metaphorically visualized the dialogue among civilizations as a confluence of great streams, some ancient and therefore running deep, others young and ebullient with the vitality of invention. We should drink from all these life-giving waters and draw sustenance and strength. This flow is without end. We wonder, therefore, at the usefulness of starting to think of initiatives of the type envisaged in the report to give a so-called "fitting conclusion" to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations through a "specific diplomatic initiative". We feel that our endeavour should rather be to launch the dialogue in its widest sense during the Year so that we may continue to reap the benefit of the sense of solidarity and common purpose in a shared endeavour, which would inform all forms of collaboration among us.

Over the past half-century, the United Nations has served as a host to all nations, promoting reconciliation and a culture of dialogue among them. The search for common moral and ethical values has led to the codification of a range of international instruments concerning tolerance, human rights, cultural cooperation and cooperation in science and technology. The values of democracy, human rights, pluralism and respect for rule of law, all civilizational influences, have acquired almost universal validity. Dialogue among and within nations and civilizations can and must promote understanding, pluralism and diversity as essential components of progress and human advancement.

The central question that we have to grapple with is how to forge societies that are truly liberal and multicultural, but which retain a sense of unity and a corpus of common values; how they can best contribute to the emergence of a truly shared and liberal "human civilization"; and how the dialogue among civilizations can deal effectively with the menaces that afflict and threaten to drown our civilizational heritage, such as poverty and underdevelopment, hunger and disease, the

emergence of xenophobia, racism, extremism, terrorism and actions of the "uncivil society".

Unprecedented advances in science and technology hold out the promise of great material progress and development. Breakthroughs in information technology are creating a new direct cultural interface across the people of the world and offer a unique possibility of intensifying productive exchanges in diverse fields. Science and technology also provide valuable tools for historic preservation, documentation and wide dissemination of the cultural heritage of all civilizations. We agree with the Secretary-General that the promotion of identity and cultural diversity could, in itself, become the very substance of dialogue among civilizations. Instead of viewing diversity as a threat, we should, as stated so eloquently by our heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration, respect one another, in all our diversity of belief, culture and language, promoting an active culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations. The parameters of this dialogue should move away from the traditional but limited approach of better knowledge of each other and understanding of our peculiarities to a greater appreciation of diversity as a variation on the theme of humanity and its unlimited potential and the enlarging of a common denominator of values and principles on which our shared humanity rests.

We commend the Secretary-General for pointing out that

> "Our world has never been more integrated, more vulnerable and more unequal". (*A/55/492/Rev.1, para. 5*)

We live through these ironies and dilemmas. A dialogue among civilizations, which hopefully will unite the advances of all civilizations, will succeed if it fosters the universal urge in our hearts for justice and equality, conscience and compassion, harmony and coherence. It must promote a sense of indivisible mutual belonging and the conviction that all, without distinction, must participate in the advancement of human civilization. We observe that the draft resolution rightly notes that civilizations are not confined to nation-States, but, rather, encompass different cultures. Nor should maintenance and promotion of identities and protection of cultural and civilizational traditions ever become a tool to shield ultranationalism and exclusionism. Exceptionalism and exclusivism are the roots of a clash of civilizations; they cannot advance a dialogue among civilizations.

A year ago my colleague, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, said:

> "dialogue should be built on the combined efforts of all States and peoples in combating violence, extremism, terrorism, poverty, famine and disease, that is, all those disasters which deny the very essence, the basis, of any civilization." (*A/54/PV.77, p. 23*)

Instead of viewing the dialogue through the prism of divisiveness, we must ensure that it promotes and consolidates the principles of pluralism and democracy, acceptance of diversity and mutual respect, freedom and equality, solidarity and a sense of shared responsibility. The dialogue must bring out the uniting features of our civilizations, all of which have contributed to the human saga, while preserving those distinctive features of a civilization which give it a distinctive genius and adds to the totality of human richness. India will contribute, in thought and in action, to this endeavour.

Mr. Aboulgheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The question that we are considering today is of particular importance, given its link to the future of relations between the civilizations of today. It is an attempt to understand the beliefs and the outlooks of others. That is essential and is an important basis for international relations and for a dialogue among civilizations. We cannot, in fact, deal successfully with a matter of international, regional or local importance unless we understand the cultural perceptions and contexts of civilizations that govern the actions of those included in these civilizations. Dialogue among civilizations is a huge area and aims at bringing together all peoples of the world and civilizations so that we can understand the conditions of the others, their perceptions and their visions.

The dialogue that we are aspiring to today is an open dialogue among civilizations without exception; a dialogue based on the attempt to understand the other persons and their concerns, interests and objectives; a dialogue that does not attempt to polarize, but attempts to convince people to live together peacefully; a dialogue far removed from intolerance, racism and the exclusion of others or the attempt to interfere in their domestic affairs, a dialogue that does not neglect cultural and civilizational differences between the

parties, but understands at the same time the overall context, common origin and common destiny that we all share; a dialogue that is not limited to philosophies and analyses of history, but is directed towards the future and tries to understand in greater depth the common roots of humanity; an approach that attempts to promote tolerance and understanding and rejection of aggression, violence and any attempt to impose one's will on others.

Perhaps our point of departure towards a fruitful dialogue among civilizations should be an attempt to agree first of all on a number of basic concepts that define the general framework for dialogue. Of these, I would mention first and foremost agreement that the framework for civilization far exceeds the limited framework of culture. While culture is limited to unity of religion, traditions and language, civilization is like a river comprising much broader concepts, given the longer history behind it. With regard to the geographical framework, it is unlimited — it goes wherever civilizations go and wherever traditions, religions and languages go. They join civilization and enrich that civilization.

Secondly, the need to remove from this dialogue the burdens of the past and the historical heritage, which includes bitter experiences and hatred, and the need to move forward with an open heart and mind.

Thirdly, the need for us to agree on the objective that we hope to attain from the dialogue among civilizations. After all, it is an attempt to understand each other, to explain ourselves to the other, to bring about coexistence between civilizations and to remove any cause of conflict and confrontation between them.

Fourthly, the need to stop pointing fingers at others and condemning their ideas or slighting their beliefs or trying to impose on them what we think is correct.

During the debate on this important issue last year, we reaffirmed our point of view and stressed the fact that we cannot imagine that civilizations or the societies that represent them are more important than others or that our situation and our historic conditions at this point in time give any country the right to feel superior to others or to dictate to others what they should or should not do.

It is categorically wrong to think that military capacity or organizational capacity in terms of economy or science could enable anyone to impose their way of life on others.

The opposite however is true because we are sure that any attempt to impose someone else's will on someone will lead to resistance and, in the end, to defeat.

The group of major civilizations that we see on the world stage today — and this world stage is very limited, even though it is very extensive — have specific characteristics and concepts, but by their very nature are in constant evolution and are always able to assimilate others and to react, but without coercion or pressure.

The experience of thousands of years and the experience of civilizations, empires and great Powers throughout our rich history has taught us that oppression will always meet with resistance and that challenges are successfully met whether over time or in terms of space.

The world of today — and I think we all agree — has gone beyond the limits known to humanity throughout its history. This has been most noticeable over the last two centuries and especially now with regard to a phenomenon that will forever be with us, namely globalization.

Globalization, with all its manifestations and concepts, whether positive or negative, imposes upon civilizations and various communities in an unprecedented way, a number of sources of friction, particularly when these civilizations come into contact with each other. It is undoubtedly this friction — which we should not call conflict or confrontation — that requires us to act cautiously and to attempt to establish moral and legal bases that guarantee peaceful coexistence and that exclude any recourse to violence and any wrong vision of supremacy and domination on the part of one vis-à-vis others.

The international community, with all its States and civilizations, be they big or small, strong or not so strong, rich or poor, whilst reaffirming that wealth and poverty are not limited to purely material aspects, reflects all aspects of civilization through various layers of culture and the ability to develop towards a world of peace, security, stability and prosperity. I affirm that the international community today, more than ever before, should adhere to the original concepts of humanity, namely, peace, peaceful coexistence,

recognition of difference and diversity and the impossibility of insisting on a single path for humanity in its development without confrontation. If we can do this, we will have enabled civilizations and humanity and States to develop in a positive way that will protect them from injustice and danger.

We have one final point that we would like to develop and examine: the need for everyone to agree on the right of self-determination for all peoples without double standards. In all respects, the occupation by one people or one State of another people or of the territory of another community is an aggression that must not be tolerated in the twenty-first century. Taking the land of others and settling on that land must not be permitted in the twenty-first century. The imposition of an embargo by one State on another people is an unforgivable crime. If humanity is able to reach agreement that everybody should be treated in the same way according to the same criteria, then we will be much closer to achieving this noble objective that we have set ourselves, namely, a constructive and positive dialogue among civilizations, a dialogue that will enable this huge Organization, the United Nations and all its bodies and agencies, to achieve these noble objectives in the fight against poverty, to eliminate disease, to bring about assistance for economic development, to guarantee global criteria for human rights and to safeguard the economic prosperity of communities as well many other objectives that we have been discussing and that we will always promote.

Egypt has participated effectively at three General Assembly sessions in the special debate on the dialogue among civilizations and in the adoption of two resolutions on this subject. The Egyptian delegation also played an active role in drafting and adopting the draft resolution submitted to the General Assembly today. It hopes that 2001 will truly be a year of dialogue among civilizations — all civilizations, without exception. While reaffirming that we intend to participate actively in sessions of the General Assembly related to this question next December, we invite the General Assembly to adopt the draft resolution without a vote in order to underscore international unanimity with regard to achieving a dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUUAM) group. On its behalf I wish to express our gratitude to the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the useful and valuable idea of a dialogue among civilizations, put forward by President Khatami. A General Assembly debate on this item is an important additional factor, confirming the significance of this Organization's work in the twenty-first century. The General Assembly's declaration of 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations has been an important step in turning this initiative into an ongoing process that will inspire our joint efforts to achieve sustainable development and strengthen peace and security on earth. The spirit of dialogue will help clear the way for harmony and coexistence, free of violence, hatred, poverty and war.

At the dawn of the new millennium, mankind is facing new problems and challenges, and new paradigms are emerging in international relations. It is becoming apparent that yesterday's bipolar world is past and that it is gradually being replaced by a multifaceted world that demands entirely new approaches aimed at unified coexistence among various cultures and civilizations. The current historic period has two directions: on the one hand, global integration, and, on the other hand, the preservation of diversity and the integrity of all nations.

The events of recent years show that diversity is frequently used as a justification for modern conflicts that are represented as confrontations between cultures, religions and ethnic groups. However, we fully share the view of Mr. Picco, the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, that many conflicts have been caused merely by the perception that diversity is a threat, whereas diversity is the fundamental value upon which our Organization was based and a source of inspiration and progress for mankind as a whole. The more we value diversity and integrity, the stronger will be the values that bring us all together. The principles of respect, tolerance, constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation among civilizations should form the basis of international relations, since, regardless of our different ways of achieving them, we are guided by common goals and values, as laid out in the Charter.

The need for dialogue has become even more pressing in the context of the ongoing and rapidly developing globalization process, one of the determining factors in mankind's current stage of development. The newest techniques in communication technology, the newest achievements in transportation,

communication and the Internet, are not only promoting dialogue, but are making it absolutely vital. Only through this kind of approach will mankind be able to use the globalization process for further economic, spiritual and cultural development.

Each of the countries on whose behalf I have the honour to speak has an ancient history, culture and civilization. People of differing nationalities, religion and culture reside in every country, and we are convinced that that diversity is the source of strength and a catalyst for the social development of our States. Our Governments are making every possible effort to create democratic States in which diversity and unity bring all social strata together on the basis of the principles of tolerance, solidarity and mutual respect. Civilizations are in one way or another interlinked.

Throughout the centuries the GUUAM States have served as a bridge between the East and the West, linked by the Great Silk Road, which passes through our countries' territories, enriching our cultures and bringing to them the ideas of diversity, tolerance and mutual cooperation. Given this invaluable legacy, the GUUAM States are making collective efforts to restore the Great Silk Road. They are focusing great attention on the question of a dialogue among civilizations. One of the most important forums in which this was discussed was the fifth general session of the Helsinki Civilian Assembly, which was held in October in the capital of Azerbaijan, Baku, with the participation of more than 500 representatives of governmental and non-governmental organizations from throughout the world.

There is no doubt that one of the inherent components of a dialogue between civilizations is the need to establish a dialogue between religions. The GUUAM States encourage dialogue among all religions. One example is the International Inter-religious Political Forum held in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, from 2 to 5 November 1999, on religion and democracy. Its participants confirmed the idea that the globalization process cannot ignore any aspect of human life, including the spiritual. An ongoing dialogue should be based on mutual respect and the loftiest humanitarian values.

The results of the Millennium Peace Summit, which was held in this Hall and in which religious leaders participated, reaffirmed at the global level the need for dialogue to use the strength of religious belief and tolerance to mobilize efforts to overcome the barriers that divide nations. The GUUAM States welcomed the round-table meeting on dialogue among civilizations organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and hopes that another such meeting will be held in the context of the United Nations-Iran dialogue among civilizations in one of the GUUAM States. This initiative should be supported, as put forward by the President of Georgia, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the Declaration adopted at the Millennium Summit, in which heads of State and Government reaffirmed that tolerance is a basic value of fundamental importance to international relations in the twenty-first century, as follows:

> "Human beings must respect one another, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted." (*resolution 55/2, United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 6*)

The GUUAM States are open to such a dialogue and intend to make their own active contribution to it.

We hope that the Governments of all States and political and spiritual leaders will make every effort to fulfil these social and cultural programmes to bring about a dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

Mr. Moura (Brazil): The various conferences and seminars held in recent months on the dialogue among civilizations have illustrated the worldwide support for the General Assembly's decision to proclaim the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Such a debate is timely and relevant as we enter the new millennium and as our world grows more integrated.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report. We also appreciate the important work coordinated by Mr. Giandomenico Picco, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for its efforts in promoting the dialogue. We also commend the many activities being carried out, among them the substantive debate on this initiative that brought together scholars, high officials and heads of State last

September in New York. We are confident that the analytical work being pursued by the Eminent Persons Group, which includes Ms. Ruth Cardoso of Brazil, will make a valuable contribution to our deliberations.

We Brazilians are proud to be part of a society that has been enriched by cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. Our history is an example of a constant dialogue among civilizations. Before the arrival of the first Portuguese settlers, the many scores of indigenous groups were entwined in a permanent cultural interchange that made possible such an interesting phenomenon as the diffusion across most of the current territory of Brazil of a language known as the *lingua geral*, which was commonly understood by most tribes.

Miscegenation has been a pattern of our socio-economic development. Brazil is the cradle of the second-largest population of African origin in the world. The racial and cultural blend that resulted from colonization and from successive waves of immigration is a truly outstanding phenomenon that has brought together in my country millions of citizens of Arab, European and Asian descent. Seen from a historical perspective, this dialogue among cultures and races has not prevented the consolidation of an autonomous identity or the expression of dissent. In Brazil this can be said of religions and beliefs, political opinions and cultural traits. But this complex evolution has also been translated into the formation of a clear nationality and a common identity for all Brazilians.

While highlighting these features of Brazilian society, we wish at the same time to touch upon some of the core values underlying the initiative to carry out a dialogue among civilizations. Those values have to do with a unity built from, and constituted by, human and cultural diversity.

It is fitting that the dialogue among civilizations is taking place under the auspices of the United Nations. The fundamental purposes and principles of the Organization are intimately associated with the idea of dialogue. Peace cannot be obtained without it. Equality and respect for the dignity of the human person are concepts that derive from the recognition of the "other", a necessary condition for dialogue. Furthermore, all parties to a dialogue must stand on an equal footing.

The Organization embodies the common ideals and endeavours of the international community. In a time marked by an unprecedented increase in trade and communications, by a technological revolution and by the acceleration of information, it is only natural that the United Nations engage in an effort to identify and discuss the common moral, ethical and philosophical bedrock upon which mankind, in its diversity, has endeavoured to search for peace, security, justice and prosperity for all. This understanding, which constitutes one of the aims of the dialogue among civilizations, can be achieved only in an environment in which all cultures, religions and civilizations are treated on equal terms.

It is important to remember, however, that such an environment exists because the international community has concluded that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and must be valued and respected as the highest principles governing all actors of the international community, be they individual or collective. A genuine dialogue among people of diverse cultures, religions and visions of the world will take place and achieve fruitful results only when these fundamental values are upheld; otherwise it will not be possible to understand our differences and to be enriched by this understanding.

We are confident that the dialogue among civilizations will foster international cooperation and contribute to the consolidation of democratic standards. I would like to take this opportunity to underscore Brazil's firm commitment to the strengthening of multilateral institutions — particularly the United Nations — and my Government's unswerving willingness to collaborate in all efforts aimed at fulfilling the objectives of the United Nations, in particular those set forth in the numerous human rights instruments to which we have subscribed.

We are confident that during the dialogue we will hear the voice of the dispossessed, that silent majority of mankind suffering from lack of food, housing, health and education — a constituency that, unfortunately, has not ceased to increase despite the acceleration of capital accumulation. In the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, during which the third United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will take place in South Africa, a country that defeated the heinous regime of apartheid, we trust that tolerance and respect for diversity will help in the relentless struggle to eliminate the scourge of racism.

In conclusion, we hope that in the coming year we shall be able, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report, to identify practical steps to counter the misconception that equates diversity with enmity. In this context, it is important to fulfil the notion of dialogue in its broadest etymological meaning by establishing a debate aimed at *logos*, or knowledge and harmony derived from logic. While reaffirming humanity's common set of goals and principles, we shall further advance towards the consolidation of the human family.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): In recent times, the world has seen the end of the cold war and of bipolar division. Today's is a new world order dominated by a single super-Power and by the globalization of markets, finance, communications and culture. The second half of the twentieth century was marked by great, and astonishing, changes in all areas of science and of learning. At the same time, negative features have given rise to concern. At a very rapid pace, science and technology have developed, wealth has grown and communications have progressed; but the gap between the rich countries of the North and the poor countries of the South is widening. The countries of the South are plagued by disease; there too the gap is widening. A minority monopolizes the world's wealth, and regional and local wars have broken out as a result; we have also seen the spread of terror, violence and hegemony, along with damage to the environment.

Those are the kinds of contradictions that we can see in today's world. Those contradictions interact among themselves, and pose a threat to international peace and security. They steer mankind into a lack of credibility and conflicts of interest, and into the abandonment of values and of cooperation. Now more than ever, we must ensure human security on the basis of sustainable development and constructive cooperation and on exchanges of interests and a deepening of understanding among peoples through a dialogue among civilizations aimed at reaching mankind's objective of a secure, prosperous future.

The President returned to the Chair.

Humanity is not composed of multiple civilizations. Throughout history, there has been only one civilization: human civilization, whatever it may be at any given time. In fact, civilization consists of reactions and continuous flows among cultures over the ages. This dialogue is thus a dialogue among cultures, which are numerous, and to which human beings cling in order to protect their identity. Civilization is the result, inter alia, of political and economic policies, of education and of social conduct. But civilization cannot come about without a culture behind it, and without moral values relating to faith.

Thus, civilization is more than the means of production, technological development and social services; it is also the values, convictions, ideas and concepts that govern society. Civilization must be diverse and must recognize the differences among peoples and among cultural perceptions.

Some feel that globalization is a philosophy that seeks to impose on the world, with its multiplicity of cultures and identities, a single ideology and to force it into a single framework in order to disseminate the idea of creating one world with one civilization, dominated by the information and communications revolution and by information technology: the concept of the global village. But people cannot accept that concept of globalization, which certain countries are inviting us to embrace: all people cannot assimilate a single culture, however global it may be, because every country has the legitimate right to affirm its own cultural identity and to develop its capacities within a framework of values, principles and outlooks. Every civilization is based on a number of moral values that determine the lifestyle of its members. Civilizations gain strength from creativity. Every civilization reflects this in its history books, through the creativity of its intellectuals.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was favoured by the Almighty with Mecca, the seat of illumination for mankind, and by the invitation with which we were honoured, to follow the faith of Islam, a faith of cooperation and peace among peoples. We are deeply convinced of the validity of a dialogue among civilizations, on the basis of the Koran, which says: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other, not that ye may despise each other. Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you." (*The Holy Koran, 49:13*)

We are called upon to cooperate with all those who believe in God; the Prophet calls upon us to seek knowledge even if the search leads us to China, and to

seek knowledge from birth to death, on the basis of our common destiny and on the equality of all human beings, whatever their language, colour, ethnic origin or cultural or ideological affiliation.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is convinced of the need to establish a constructive dialogue that will result in prosperity for all mankind and that will enrich culture and intellectual development. That culture would be based on logic and on credible principles founded on the precepts of Islam.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia welcomed resolution 53/22 of 4 November 1998, by which the Assembly proclaimed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We reject theories holding that conflict among civilizations is inevitable and is a scientific fact. Past and present conflicts have always had political and economic domination and territorial expansion for their objectives. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers such ideologies a threat to the safety, security and stability of peoples. Moreover, the Kingdom rejects any attempt by one civilization to dominate another, as this would constitute a dangerous violation of the principles of justice, tolerance and cooperation, and would lay the foundations of injustice and oppression.

Cultural diversity among human beings blazes an efficient and effective path to prosperity. Every people has the right to defend its distinct cultural identity and its particular characteristics. World peace and peaceful coexistence must encompass all cultures, so that they can make their cultural contribution to a prosperous future for mankind.

The dialogue among civilizations is the only way to achieve cooperation so as to bring about a new world order based on common moral values, guaranteeing a better future for humanity through peace, security, stability, solidarity and development in a framework of human cooperation and respect for the multiplicity of peoples and cultures, thereby enriching Islamic civilization and humanity at large.

Mr. Baali (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Although the concept of a dialogue among civilizations emerged a long time ago, paradoxically it owes its new incarnation as much to the stimulus provided by the Iranian President, who proposed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, as to the dire prediction of a catastrophic clash between civilizations made by an oracle who was clearly ill-inspired.

The dialogue among civilizations is now a concept that is widely recognized, accepted and celebrated — a fact that can only be welcomed by all of us in this house of glass who advocate dialogue and work towards a culture of peace.

In these troubled and uncertain times, when humanity is asking itself questions about its future and facing up to new kinds of challenges that confront it collectively, dialogue is more important than ever in keeping us from the mistakes of the past and enabling us to enter the new millennium with an unshakeable faith in the ability of humankind to rise above adversity.

The history of humanity in the past century, however, was characterized more by confrontation than by dialogue. Just a few years ago, the very existence of the world was threatened by nuclear holocaust, which would have annihilated the whole of humanity, and we were spared only through the strict observance of a fragile and absurd balance of terror. The end of the cold war, which coincided with the end of the millennium and the announcement by the nuclear Powers that they would undertake to completely eliminate their nuclear weapons, seems to have exorcised the demons of destruction that threatened the world with total annihilation.

The cold war, however, was only one of the many episodes that plunged the world into mourning and brought about death and desolation. Large-scale confrontation, which often arises from religious, ethnic and racial intolerance, has also been fed by economic aspirations, the search for living space and the conquest of new colonial empires, which in turn gives rise to further confrontations legitimately based on the aspirations of peoples to freedom and independence. Such confrontation will continue until the causes disappear — that is, until there is true solidarity between peoples and we are convinced of the need to accept diversity and to respect each other despite our differences.

Given its geographic location, my country has always been at the crossroads of major civilizations. Situated at the point where Africa and Europe meet — the junction between the Arab-Islamic civilization and the western world — and, having much in common the peoples of the Mediterranean, Algeria has been a part

of some of the most prestigious civilizations, whose influence has spread throughout the region to which we belong, providing us with the opportunity to make a generous contribution to their development and to benefit from their vitality.

Algeria is an ancient nation whose roots extend through a rich and glorious prehistory, as shown by the frescoes and rock drawings of Tassili, which depict the way of life of the first men and women who populated our country thousands of years ago. Very early in its history, therefore, Algeria was able to interact — sometimes harshly, but often amiably — with the major civilizations of the Mediterranean basin, in particular the Greek, Phoenician, Roman, Byzantine, Arab-Islamic and sub-Saharan African civilizations and, eventually, with that of the modern western world.

The collective memory of the Algerian people and its heritage overflows with evidence of this interaction with the rest of the world. Numerous aspects of the daily life of our peoples within this sphere of interaction are a constant reminder of the contribution of the sons and daughters of Algeria to the economic, social and cultural development of these peoples. This evidence is to be found in legacies as varied as our culture, social life, language, architecture and culinary arts.

Proud of its Berber past, with its prosperous kingdoms and struggles for independence, Algeria fully takes its modern-day place within the Arab-Muslim civilization, with the satisfaction of knowing that we have made a significant contribution to the expansion of this civilization that has carried the torch of knowledge to distant lands. The Algerian people are tolerant, generous and open to renewal, and today we are undertaking the ambitious task of making our country, which has been damaged by a tragic period of violence, a good example of peaceful and harmonious coexistence, and to bring together, in solidarity and unity, all of our constituent parts within one nation, held together by a common destiny and the shared aspirations for a better future.

Algeria participated actively in the round table organized on 5 September by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on dialogue among civilizations. In his statement in that discussion, the President of Algeria welcomed the initiative of the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran to proclaim 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This initiative is very timely, having come at a moment when we are considering the possibility of undertaking a fruitful and balanced dialogue among civilizations that are at different developmental stages — unequal stages, especially in the simplistic context of globalization. Countries that are poor in terms of resources, but often rich in culture, might justly fear that certain ethical and social values that they hold very dear might be eroded or even destroyed by the universal application of a one-dimensional model originating in countries that are materially prosperous.

Today, in a world of constant political, economic and socio-cultural flux characterized by unprecedented scientific and technological development, especially in the areas of information and communication, and by an irreversible globalization affecting every sphere of human activity, dialogue between civilizations — all civilizations — may provide an essential means of dealing with the many factors of confrontation and war. By embracing such a dialogue, the world will be opening the way to the emergence of a genuine culture of peace and understanding between nations, of respect for the right of peoples to self-determination and to choose their own lifestyle, thereby making possible the abolition of all forms of racism, intolerance and discrimination — that is to say, a culture of effective respect for human rights and the rights of peoples.

In order to achieve this objective, what better forum than the United Nations — this universal arena that brings together all of the nations of the world, large and small, rich and developing, in active partnership with the new actors on the international stage: the members of civil society, notably the non-governmental organizations, the press and the media. All of these actors are today called upon to play their role in the promotion of a genuine dialogue between civilizations, which should lead to the establishment of a set of underlying common values — the foundation of a true universal civilization. This should be done without denying the existence of particular aspects of other civilizations. In this way the diversity and the richness of our human heritage will be recognized, as will the need to build a new world of understanding and acceptance.

Against this background, Algeria encourages the United Nations and its various agencies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in particular, to undertake all

actions and initiatives that might contribute to the promotion of a dialogue between civilizations. It goes without saying, however, that devoting the year 2001 to this purpose does not imply that the objective of dialogue among civilizations will then either have been achieved or be obsolete. On the contrary, it must continue to prevail as a source of inspiration and reference in all our thoughts on how to promote a culture of peace in the world and encourage tolerance and coexistence between all peoples.

Mr. Ahmad (Malaysia): Throughout human history, despite the obstacles of intolerance and aggression, there has been constructive interaction among civilizations, bringing about development and progress for mankind. While nation-States belong to particular cultural or civilizational domains, cultures and civilizations are not confined to individual nation-States. The achievements of civilizations constitute a common heritage of humanity, which provides the basis for the progress and well-being of mankind. Indeed, the very existence of the United Nations is premised on, and the product of, this dialogue and cooperation among the various peoples and nations of the world.

The unity of the human spirit is underlined in the various religions and cultures of the world. It provides a solid foundation for dialogue and understanding among peoples with diverging views and traditions. The strengthening of mutually friendly relations and recognition among peoples of the world would help to promote peace and expand social, cultural and economic cooperation in international relations.

Respect for cultural diversity and civilizational specificities have become recognized means of advancing creative human inspiration. Different cultures and civilizations provide a rich source of knowledge and wisdom for addressing comprehensively common material and spiritual challenges through faith and human values. Liberty, justice, solidarity and morality are indispensable in the global endeavour to promote human development, peace, mutual security and friendly relations among peoples.

Dialogue is an imperative necessity for coexistence and international cooperation, and it is an essential process if we wish to avoid domination, aggression and other manifestations of human conflict. The future of humanity is contingent upon faith in, and compliance with, the aforementioned values, coupled with sincere efforts to build upon the achievements of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in promoting peace and human development.

My delegation is sad to note that despite the ideals that this body is promoting and doing its best to effect, feelings of distrust and animosity still prevail. A few weeks back, a film was shown on the premises of the United Nations focusing on the unjustified killing of women in the name of "honour". While we are not questioning the motivation behind the making of the film, it is most unfortunate that it conveyed the impression that Islam condones so-called honour killings. This negative stereotyping of Islam reflects not only a lack of knowledge and understanding of this important world religion, but also a lack of sensitivity towards the hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world. The perpetuation of such stereotyping of Islam, especially in the West, not only does not contribute to creating greater understanding between peoples and cultures, but impedes the process of dialogue among civilizations that has been initiated.

In the Malaysian context, while we are a young nation, having achieved our independence only 43 years ago, we can proudly claim to have benefited from the rich cultural heritage of world civilizations. We are a multiracial, multicultural and multireligious society. In spite of this diversity, we in Malaysia have been able to enjoy peace and harmony, thanks to the practice of inter-communal dialogue and understanding among our people. Malaysia's unity in diversity is the result of the tolerance demonstrated by, and the attitude of openness on the part of, our people towards the practice of different religions in the country. The peace and harmony that prevail among the multi-ethnic people of Malaysia have allowed us to reap the full benefits of independence, as reflected by the political, social and economic progress in our country.

The call for a dialogue among civilizations stems from the collective wisdom of humankind and its desire to avoid conflict and violence, in their broadest sense, through a better articulation and appreciation of the different ideas, visions and aspirations of the global community. My delegation therefore fully supports all efforts that strengthen the process of inter-civilizational dialogue, including in particular the adoption of the draft resolution presented today.

The draft before us calls for a universal vision to build an equitable international order founded on inclusion, participation, mutual understanding and tolerance among peoples and nations through practice, education and cooperative engagement. It also invites the international community to utilize dialogue for confidence-building in various fields and to replace exclusion, the resort to force and domination of all kinds with an equitable international order of inclusion, tolerance and mutual human security and development.

This global agenda is not restrictive, and can be achieved through the political, cultural, educational, social, economic, information and even technological domains. We can even develop an appropriate mechanism at all local, international and regional levels to pursue and encourage dialogue in all fields and expand mutual recognition and understanding among civilizations. This body can also form a special committee to encourage, coordinate and facilitate dialogue among civilizations and formulate appropriate ways and means to promote the culture of dialogue and inclusion of activities of the United Nations system.

My delegation welcomes the principles of the Tehran Declaration, adopted in December 1997, and the resolution, adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in November 1998, on dialogue among civilizations, which designated 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. My delegation also hopes that this dialogue can and will facilitate and provide a suitable framework for constructive and enriching interactions among peoples of various origins and persuasions, on the premise that the diversity of humankind is, and has always been, a source of strength and not a cause of division. We are gratified that the international community has indicated its willingness to embrace the idea as a fresh and rational approach towards attaining a better tomorrow for all of humanity.

We believe that the promotion of dialogue, on the basis of tolerance and respect for diversity, will result in a reduction of tensions and conflict among peoples and nations and contribute positively to international peace and security.

In this regard, we believe the United Nations can and should play an important role to support the process. Indeed, the United Nations itself is the living proof and embodiment of the importance of dialogue among civilizations, as the Member States come from not only different regions of the world, but also diverse civilizational backgrounds. While the aim of the United Nations is to forge unity among nations, this unity should be arrived at through the harmonious blending and assimilation of ideas, values and norms of all human societies, rather than the imposition or domination of any single group of nations or societies. This is reflected in both the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which should continue to provide our guiding principles as we seek to attain our common goal of peace, security and harmony among nations.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): History has shown that dominance, rather than dialogue, has characterized relations between civilizations. Civilizations have been prone to rise at the expense of other civilizations. If this is a dictate of history, it is one that we must resist. And here in the United Nations, where civilizations past and present have a voice, is perhaps the best place to begin. For the challenges we face today demand that we exert every effort and exhaust every avenue in dealing with them.

In this regard, we must thank and congratulate the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative and untiring efforts to establish the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We are very encouraged by the work that has already been done. The Government of Iran, the United Nations, individual nations and civil society have organized activities that encourage and promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations. This is excellent groundwork and we will continue to support these activities.

Dialogue is the main tool of our Organization. Dialogue and discussions are things that we are very familiar with. We have been accused of using them too much, but we have made progress and achieved much over the years through dialogue and diplomacy.

But there have also been many missed opportunities. There is also much left to do. Misunderstanding and mistrust are still pervasive. We are still far from realizing universal and lasting peace. Conflicts continue in many parts of the world and in forms that defy description.

Our leaders last September committed themselves to addressing the many problems that face us: poverty, disease, environmental degradation, hatred and violence. It is our desire to have globalization benefit all and not a few, to provide a better life to the more

than 1 billion people living in abject poverty. We must make available safe drinking water, basic health care and education, food and shelter, as well as bring peace to all members of humankind, whatever their civilizations may be.

In the final analysis, no one civilization can deal with these difficulties. All our civilizations will have to face these challenges.

Today the lines of communication for dialogue between peoples, between nations and between civilizations are many, and the dialogue moves along these lines at the speed of thought. We would prefer that the words and images that move so fast and so far be those that promote trust and understanding.

But there are times when it seems that when we engage in dialogue we speak past each other and not to each other. It appears that when we speak we are more intent on letting others know what is on our minds than on being open to what others are trying to convey. It also appears that when we engage in dialogue we bring with us our biases and prejudice, which close our ears and erect barriers to what others are saying. Sadly, we stress the differences that divide us rather than those that bind us. Surely, these are not the elements that will lead us to understanding one another and to peace.

A golden opportunity lies ahead as we undertake further activities that will promote dialogue among our civilizations. This is an opportunity that we hope will pave the way to greater understanding. But first, before we engage in dialogue, let us cast away the biases we have about each other's civilizations. Let us speak with each other, unburdened by misconceptions. Differences in the greatness of civilizations need not be emphasized. Let us stress instead what is common to us all. And that is our humanity and the concerns that are shared by all.

There is a common and fine thread that runs through the fabric of all civilizations. That fine thread is our humanity. Let us allow this dialogue among our civilizations to strengthen this thread of humanity. Let this dialogue be among partners and friends, and among equals united in the goal of addressing the most difficult problems that beset our world, our civilizations and of all humankind.

In this way, we will be closer to our hope and expectation that this dialogue among our civilizations will lead us to greater understanding and lasting peace.

Mr. Al-Absi (United Arab Emirates) *(spoke in Arabic)*: I begin by thanking the Secretary-General for his report, which contains very important information that can help us in our deliberations on this agenda item, which is of particular importance at the dawn of the third millennium, at a time when humanity is again facing outbreaks of conflict, hostility and occupation. We are witnessing hegemony, an arms race, the illegitimate use of force, human rights violations and discrimination. This state of affairs is characterized by an increase in racism, nationalism, inequality and a lack of understanding among civilizations and peoples, although these civilizations themselves, without exception, are the cultural heritage of humanity.

We attach particular importance to the wishes expressed by heads of State and Government in the Millennium Declaration for a strengthening of international peace and security, the rule of law, understanding, tolerance and pluralism. However, we feel that in order to achieve these goals we need to set up adequate regional and international mechanisms and programmes that will enable us to bring about positive interaction and reinforce solidarity and complementarity among societies. This should encourage cultures and civilizations to work towards dialogue, tolerance and understanding, particularly since globalization and the revolution in information technology and communications offer us a unique and increasing opportunity to reach these goals for the benefit of the economy and the environment. We can also benefit from this interaction to further promote globalization.

We are convinced that dialogue among civilizations must be multidimensional. It must be a dialogue among religions and beliefs; it must also be a dialogue among countries of North and South, East and West. It must facilitate cultural and political exchanges and the sharing of the positive aspects of each and every civilization. For these reasons, a dialogue leading to mutual enrichment can only be based on equality, objectivity and transparency, the principles of human rights and the precepts of international law, with no attempts at domination, discrimination and double standards very often exercised by large Powers against developing countries and peoples.

We also stress that dialogue among civilizations must face up to the manifest disinformation propagated by some with regard to Islam and its traditions and to genuine Arab traditions.

Dealing with the subject of dialogue among civilizations leads us to a careful examination of history and the cultural and scientific components of all civilizations. The Arab world, to which the United Arab Emirates belongs, was born of ancient civilizations and is the cradle of the revealed religions, of which Islam was born and from which its philosophy extended — not only to the peoples of the Arab world, the Levant and the Maghreb, but also to other parts of the world. The traditions and customs of the Arab peoples, based on the Holy Koran and on the precepts of Islamic culture, which call for tolerance, equality, solidarity and respect for cultural diversity among peoples, have led the United Arab Emirates to adopt legislation, and to implement cultural and education programmes, with a view to consolidating noble moral and human values in its citizens and urging them to respect the cultures and traditions of other peoples. We have also allowed foreign minorities in our country to exercise their religious, cultural and social customs and beliefs. Throughout the year we organize cultural festivals, promote folk activities and invite personalities and intellectuals to participate in these international forums; this helps us to open up our society to the concept of cultural diversity, while observing our own cultural specificities.

With regard to the external world, the United Arab Emirates has signed a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding and arranged cultural and informational exchanges in the area of education at the bilateral, regional and international level. The Emirates has participated in conferences, book fairs and artistic and cultural events throughout the world. This has facilitated our cooperation and interaction with other peoples and civilizations.

In conclusion, we support the proclamation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We hope that this will enable us to make dialogue a new approach and instrument in international relations, thus contributing to bringing together peoples and countries of the world, strengthening solidarity and openness. We hope that this will also help to address the most urgent regional and international problems, such as peace and security, disarmament, poverty, unemployment, pandemics and other problems, including damage to the environment or violations of human rights.

Mr. Nasser (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of my country, I wish to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for his report before the General Assembly.

The item entitled "Dialogue among civilizations" reflects not only the significance of the dialogue among civilizations, but also the resolve of the international community to enter the third millennium on the basis of an approach adopted during the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, at which the Assembly declared the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and reconfirmed the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter in fostering and encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. It further recognized the cultural and civilizational accomplishments of the human race that embody diversity, transparency and creativity, and reconfirmed the fact that the achievements of civilizations constitute the common heritage of humanity.

My country has followed the meetings held on this issue over the past two years and the resolution adopted at the twenty-seventh session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, held in Kuala Lumpur from 27 to 30 June 2000, which noted with satisfaction the importance of the Universal Declaration on Dialogue Among Civilizations issued in this respect. The concerted efforts of all peoples, Governments, intergovernmental organizations and civil society to implement this programme and to support the spirit of diversity, dialogue and interaction are the only alternative to the culture of confrontation, conflict and exclusivity.

The United Nations, a forum comprising all cultures and approaches, has an essential role in bringing differing points of view together and in promoting understanding and cooperation. The General Assembly's adoption of the Declaration on a Culture of Peace demonstrated our commitment to the Organization's work to ensure a future in which a culture of peace and the values of freedom, justice, democracy, development, respect for human rights, equity, equality, non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the prohibition of aggression and occupation, and respect for the sovereignty and the uniqueness of each society are effective building-blocks of dialogue aimed at coexistence and mutual understanding.

My delegation supports the proclamation made by the General Assembly at its forty-third session of the

year 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We also welcome the Secretary-General's decision to appoint a Personal Representative in this respect.

In conclusion, dialogue among civilizations is possible and desirable today, at the dawn of a new millennium, more than ever before to build an edifice of understanding among nations and peoples.

Mr. Kouliev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): My delegation endorses and fully supports the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine on behalf of the Georgia Uzbekistan Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova Group. I also wish to convey my country's position on certain aspects of the question under discussion.

Next year, the first of the new millennium, has been proclaimed the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This is very symbolic, but its symbolism is not accidental. Entering a new era, the international community should seek dialogue in all areas in order to end conflict and confrontation.

Many predictions have been made regarding the nature of the new era, among them George Soros's "open society" era, Brian Eno's "big market years", William Matthews's "information era" and many others, all the way to Francis Fukuyama's "end of history". However, lengthy discussions were engendered by Huntington's prediction of a "clash of civilizations". There is an advantage to such predictions, since the potential danger of a clash of civilizations helped to launch the dialogue among civilizations.

In his statement of June 1999 to the Centre for Islamic Studies of Oxford University, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the adoption of a new world ethic to encompass the entire world's cultural diversity and to remove lines of division.

At this session, the initiative has also emerged in support of a new humanitarian order. All this demonstrates the growing desire of the world community for mutual understanding and an end to confrontation. We need to work on the concept of a new world order, no matter what we call it, and the main thing is to identify practical measures for its implementation.

The current era is characterized by globalization. In the context of the dialogue among civilizations, I wish to dwell on the globalization of culture, which might ultimately be called a "new civilization". We are seeing an ever greater number of people, especially the young, turning to a generalized culture. This does not mean merely pop music, Coca Cola and Hollywood movies — it encompasses an entire system of values and its concomitant mentality and behaviour.

In this regard, one cannot fail to be concerned by the fact that certain manufacturers of these pop-cultural commodities are seeking to impose on consumers their own stereotypical understanding of many cultures and religions. Thus, we are seeing with growing frequency the fabrication for narrow political motives of a negative image of Muslims as potential terrorists and fanatics.

Terror knows no nationality and covers all continents. The terrorist acts that have taken place in recent decades in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and elsewhere have been carried out under various political and religious banners. Azerbaijan has also suffered from terrorism. This attitude towards Islam is therefore groundless. Moreover, overheated religious enmity can become the pretext for a clash of civilizations.

History demonstrates that the ancient and enlightened Muslim civilization has made a huge contribution to the development of humanity in the spiritual, philosophical, scientific and other spheres. Medieval Islamic civilization preserved the values of the ancient Greco-Roman culture at a time when Europe was mired in fighting and religious fanaticism. It not only served as a bridge between the Greco-Roman culture and the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, but introduced many new ideas. Currently, Islam is a religion that unites hundreds of millions of people and calls for tolerance. In its basic teachings, Islam calls for respect for the holy figures of Judaism and Christianity.

With a multitude of cultures and where for centuries followers of various religions have peacefully coexisted, from the Zoroastrians up through the most recent religions and sects, and where various cultures have interacted, such as the Turks, Arabs, Russians, Persians and others — my country became convinced through its experience that dialogue among civilizations is possible, useful and necessary, since it reciprocally enriches cultures and nations.

In Azerbaijan many religions have lived and continue to live peacefully — in particular the Muslim,

Christian and Jewish religions. Moreover, the followers of many sects, for example Russian Orthodox Old Believers, found shelter in Azerbaijan when they were being persecuted in their own countries. Unfortunately, in the past decade my country has been drawn into an inter-State conflict due to the strivings of a neighbouring State to expand its territory at our expense and the proponents of this war are frequently trying to represent it as a struggle between Christians and Muslims. My country firmly rejects and condemns the exploitation of religion for political purposes.

The best proof of this is the fact that in Azerbaijan followers of different religions, cultures and ethnic groups continue to live peacefully and to enjoy freedoms — groups such as Azerbaijanis, Russians, Georgians, Jews, Tartars and others. Moreover, regardless of the ongoing conflict, tens of thousands of Armenian nationals are living in Baku. In general, cultural and religious tolerance is a feature that is characteristic of the Turkic peoples from ancient times. In this connection, I wish to refer to some historical facts. The appearance of the Turks under Seljuk leadership, in the Caucasus and the Middle East in the eleventh century, promoted the development of the region, as seen from medieval historical sources. I would like particularly to quote the words of the medieval Armenian chronicler, Kirakos Gandzaketsi, who wrote about the leadership of one of the first Turkish Seljuk leaders, Melik Shah, who freed the Armenian priesthood from having to pay taxes. The quote is that "He tamed the universe, not by violence, but through love and peace." Another example is when, in the fifteenth century, the Jews were being persecuted in Europe and found shelter in the Turkic State.

Examples of the interaction of followers of different religions and cultures are many, and this relates to all regions and continents. It is these kinds of examples that should inspire us towards peace and cooperation, and not "historical speculations" about conflicts that have taken place. In this connection, European history in the second half of the twentieth century gives a good example of how outstanding results can be achieved by rejecting confrontation and the propaganda of hatred and by following the path of democracy and cooperation. The cornerstone in the modern European order is respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the strengthening of democracy.

We feel that this is the foundation on which dialogue needs to be constructed among civilizations. At the same time, I have to state that no country in the world can claim authorship to the principles of democracy and enforce the spread of its own lifestyle. The values of democracy are universal and are the achievement of human civilization as a whole. However, today we still hear a certain amount of preaching in international relations. Dialogue means equality and has to be conducted with respect for cultural diversity and without "dual standards".

Having passed through destructive wars, mankind has come to the need for mutual understanding and compromise. Our Organization provides a fine opportunity to strengthen cooperation in new dimensions, such as a dialogue among civilizations. I am sure that other international and regional organizations will also be able to make their own contribution to this cause. In this connection, I wish to emphasize the role of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, which is preparing a document relating to global common values and a 10-year programme of action, the beginning of which will be set for next year, the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.

I also wish to point to the contribution made by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. At the threshold of the Millennium Summit, there was an interesting roundtable discussion under the auspices of that Organization. The strengthening of dialogue among civilizations can be achieved not only through the development of intergovernmental dialogue in various forms, but also through the practical measures taken by States. To achieve this, we do not need to invent anything new. It is necessary to have genuine commitment on the part of States to the already-existing international legal documents and also to the normative documents adopted within the context of the United Nations system in the area of human rights, tolerance and cultural cooperation.

In conclusion, I wish to mention the contribution of my country to the development of dialogue among civilizations. During the course of the recently held fifth General Assembly of the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Baku in October where, among many others, the question of dialogue among civilizations was discussed. A meeting was organized consisting of representatives of civil society from Azerbaijan and Armenia. I am sure that such meetings are the practical

fulfilment of the idea of dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): At the outset, my delegation would like to recognize and express appreciation for the continued and tireless efforts made over the past two years by the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the guidance of His Excellency President Khatami, in bringing this issue of a dialogue among civilizations to the United Nations agenda.

Let me also thank the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his informative introductory statement delivered earlier this morning. My delegation also welcomes the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/55/492/Rev.1, which indicates that the call for dialogue among civilizations has been well received across the world and that it has led to the launch of a number of initiatives aimed at celebrating and at diffusing the fear of diversity and underscoring the importance of inclusion.

A dialogue among civilizations is truly a most fitting and timely subject for our collective consideration, not only because we are now at the beginning of a new era in history, but also due to the tremendous changes occurring throughout the world. Indeed, Indonesia looks forward to the implementation of the many promotional activities that will be held in celebration of this event. Today, more than at any other time in history, the diverse cultures of mankind are coming together. Faster forms of communication via the Internet and increased population mobility within and among all countries is bringing increasing contact between all corners of the world.

It is fitting that the year 2001 has been proclaimed the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This clearly indicates the direction we should take and the commitment of the international community to secure a world of tolerance, thoughtful deliberation and equality. Through the adoption of the draft resolution on the Year of Dialogue, we seek greater global integration and stability through better understanding between nations and peoples, in order to achieve a higher level of trust and a better awareness of our mutual goals and objectives. The convening of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held during the same year further supports the notion that we in the international community are determined to craft a global environment of peace, security and equality in which diversity is viewed as a strength.

Never before in the history of mankind have we, as diverse cultures and peoples, been brought into such immediate contact with anything so rapid and pervasive. Technology, advances in communication and the rapid entry of globalization as the new paradigm of international relations all offer significant benefits and advantages that we either adapt to or ignore at great peril.

Often when we discuss the virtues and vices of globalization, it is within the context of the global economy and business relationships — the free flow of goods and services from one corner of the globe to another. But globalization also brings greater interrelationships between people and increased interaction among cultures. History will tell us that this exchange of ideas and exposure to new concepts and traditions is a positive force that has greatly benefited humanity. Therefore, we should take this new force of globalization and give it a human face through dialogue among civilizations.

The international Year holds considerable implications for the dialogue that exists between North and South, rich and poor. I would recall that the Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 1997 emphasized the imperative of positive interaction, dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions, and that it rejected the theories of clash and conflict. Indonesia fully subscribes to this viewpoint and believes that both developed and developing countries can only benefit from an increased knowledge and awareness of other cultures and traditions; for it is these very elements that shape the goals we seek in development and provide the context for our individual visions of the future.

Indonesia would recall the statement by the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, during the round table on dialogue among civilizations, convened by Iran and the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 5 September 2000, that the dialogue is so relevant because of the self-evident need for all to learn how to manage diversity better. At no time in history has this been more important than it is today, as we all seek to adapt to, and cope with, the new paradigm of globalization and enhanced forms of mass

communication. Certainly, globalization risks creating an imbalance within certain societies and regions as new ideas and methods can be injected at such a rapid pace that they do not allow for the opportunity of acceptance. Therefore, in the absence of a dialogue among civilizations, we can foresee increased misunderstanding on many different levels and in a wide range of activities. Likewise, we consider it equally important for us to understand our internal as well as external situations.

The importance that Indonesia attaches to the dialogue is evident in the participation of President Abdurrahman Wahid in the round-table discussions. At that event, President Wahid indicated that without this dialogue among civilizations there is no compulsion for us to have an intensified internal dialogue. In fact, if there is to be a successful dialogue among nations, there must also be a dialogue within nations. For Indonesia, with its many diverse ethnic and religious groups, this is particularly true.

Following more than 30 years of a rigid political system, we are now beginning to see the growth and full expression of democracy in Indonesia. This expression has, however, shed light on the contradictions that exist between modernization and the traditionalism of those who cling to a singular view of the world. Internally, we in Indonesia must have such a dialogue and begin to understand how we can reconcile traditionalism and modernity. We believe that the internal dialogue will support our determination to hold a successful dialogue among civilizations while, at the same time, we see the dialogue among civilizations as important in providing the context for deliberations at the national level.

I should like to conclude by underscoring the forward-looking nature of the dialogue among civilizations and our support of the outcome of the Millennium Summit. In that effort, we would encourage all Members and elements of society to join in a dialogue both among and within civilizations. We therefore lend our support to the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.30 and its call on Governments to encourage such participation in the dialogue. We also welcome the decision to be made through the draft resolution to devote two days of plenary meetings at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly to considering this item, including follow-up measures. We are confident that the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations will be successful, and Indonesia will continue to contribute to its success at the highest level.

Mr. Al-Humaimidi (Iraq) *(spoke in Arabic)*: May I at the outset express my sincere thanks to the delegation of Iran for taking the initiative to include the item "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations" in the agenda of the General Assembly.

At the threshold of the third millennium, the significance of a dialogue among civilizations and cultures increases as an indispensable way to achieve peace, stability and development throughout the world.

Undoubtedly, today's human advances are a product of the different civilizations that have arisen throughout history and represent an indivisible chain of evolution, with each link playing an effective role in bringing humanity to a higher level of progress.

My country is proud to be the cradle of such ancient civilizations as the Samarian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations. Creativity flowed, reaching a peak when Baghdad was the capital of the Islamic Arab civilization, whose contributions in the fields of science, art and literature formed an innovative channel, linking ancient civilizations to the modern age and leading humanity to its present achievements. Thus, the Arab Islamic civilization embodied the concepts of dialogue among civilizations, tolerance and balance in spiritual, physical and human needs. The Arab nation is qualified to continue its historic mission by effectively contributing to the making of modern civilization.

Throughout this century, humanity has witnessed destructive conflicts, resulting often from a prevailing tendency towards evil, aggression, racism, colonialism, delusions of national supremacy, the arms race, economic privileges, the illegal use of force and the imposition of inhumane sanctions. The international community is duty bound to curb this destructive tendency, and the dialogue among civilizations is the best way to achieve that.

Certain basic principles are important for the dialogue among civilizations to be positive and effective and to attain its desired goals, foremost of which is respect for cultural diversity, based on human dignity and equality among individuals. Recognition of such diversity is a feature of human society and should be accompanied by tolerance, mutual respect for viewpoints and the values that characterize diverse

cultures and civilizations; respect for moral and religious values; recognition of the diversity of sources of knowledge and the need to benefit from all sources of power, wealth and wisdom for all civilizations; the rejection of any discrimination by other cultures and of any form of acceptance of the notion of cultural supremacy; respect for peoples' will in choosing their political, economic, social and cultural systems; and the rejection of any imposed systems of government on others.

Also rejected is the imposition of hegemony, supremacy and interference in the internal affairs of States. Occupation and aggression must be rejected. We must accept cooperation as a means to strengthen common values and an international order in which no single State is in exclusive control of the world order, serving its own interests while disregarding the interests of other peoples and States.

There must be a just and equitable international economic order that conforms to the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter and that is not governed by the use of reckless brutal force or the threat of its use. All peoples and nations must participate, without distinction, in decision-making and the equitable distribution of benefits.

These are the basic principles that my delegation deems necessary for effective and positive dialogue. In addition to the role being played by non-governmental organizations in promoting the culture of dialogue among various societies, it is also incumbent upon Governments to encourage dialogue through educational, cultural and social programmes.

We also maintain that the United Nations, as a representative body of all peoples of the world, can play a pioneering role through the General Assembly or the United Nations agencies and bodies, particularly the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in encouraging dialogue and in contributing to the development of universal ideas and principles in the light of the principles I have mentioned.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to inform members that on Wednesday, 15 November, the General Committee of the General Assembly will hold a meeting at 9.30 a.m. in Conference Room 1 to take up a request by Equatorial Guinea, contained in document A/55/237, for the inclusion in the agenda of the current session of an additional item entitled "Observer status for the Economic Community of Central African States in the General Assembly".

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.